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KOVILPATTI
RURAL EXTENSION TRAINING CENTRE

G R A M S E V A K

UARY 1960

PANCHAYATI RAJ

S. K. DEY

IN THE PAST, history used to be made by ambitious adventurers through their conquests over others. Might was then right. The subjugation of one people by another by the might of the sword was what entered into the annals of history.

The world is moving forward. With this movement has come a new orientation in values. Historic events now consist of the mighty using their superior might to liberate others who are less so. This delegation of power and transfer of initiative is being done without a drop of blood being shed.

Rajasthan since the dawn of her history had seen almost nothing but invasion and conquests by one powerful people over another. I have been carrying the new message of liberation that Rajasthan ushered in on October 2 last year to all other parts of India. Other States also are doing the same. The significant example is Andhra Pradesh which brought all the Community Project areas under the new system of Panchayati Raj from 1st November, the anniversary of the birth of Andhra State. Madras, Orissa, Mysore and Assam are following the same. Other States also will follow.

The programme of Panchayati Raj now being worked out in the Rajasthan villages is something new for her people. We know there will have been many a trial and error already. We have had village panchayats in the past, but the system of Panchayati Raj working from the village and linked organically up to the nation's Parliament is something without a precedent in our history. It is not unnatural therefore that it will prove difficult to find answers for the many problems that have arisen or will arise, by sitting inside closed rooms as we do in Government offices from where we try to decide the destiny of the nation.

The situation calls for meeting of mind between the Pradhans and Sarpanches. It is necessary that these people's representatives discuss their problems collectively in an open forum, with the Government agency on the one hand and representatives of higher institutions such as the State Legislature and the Parliament on the other. It is only when we pool all our wisdom that we shall discover our own answers to the new problems.

In India, the eldest brother in a family is expected to play an important role. The eldest brother is sent by God ahead of the other brothers and sisters. His is the privilege to be at the head of the procession. His also is the burden to see that the last in the procession stands in line hale, hearty and erect as all others. It is the weakest link in a chain, they say, that determines its strength. It is the last man in a procession that determines the speed of the procession. God having sent the eldest brother as the head of the procession looks up to him to see that the last youngster in the procession is looked after and maintained intact by the one who is at the head of it.

Panchayati Raj demands the same of us individually, also organisationally. Organisationally, the Parliament as the apex institution is expected to give the lead to the State Legislature, the Parliament and the State Legislature combined to the Zilla Parishad, the Zilla Parishad in turn to the Block Panchayat Samiti, the Samiti to the village Panchayat and the Panchayat to each family. Individually, the Prime Minister is expected to give lead as the Leader of the House and the eldest brother to the members of his Cabinet and the Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The Chief Minister in the State is expected to do the same *vis-a-vis* his Cabinet colleagues and Members of the State Legislature. The same thing applies to the Zilla Parishad, Block Panchayat Samiti, Panchayat and the family. In effect, it means that we are really out on a pilgrimage to build a vast family of India in the likeness of the God-given family. The eldest in the family of India looks after the well-being of all. All members of the family

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GANDHIJI'S DREAM COMING TRUE

THE CHANGES brought about by Panchayati Raj were much more radical in nature than any thing else in the Community Development Programme ever since its inception in 1952, said Shri S. K. Dey, Union Minister for Community Development and Cooperation, inaugurating the two-day Staff conference of State Development Commissioners at Delhi recently. In the States where the system of Panchayati Raj had been introduced, the Minister added, it had given a new sense of responsibility and had released the stored up energies of the people who now functioned without old restraints and inhibitions. Without proper direction and guidance, this might lead to a dangerous situation. Properly implemented, it would strengthen the foundations of democracy and ensure its exercise from the Gram Sabha to the Lok Sabha.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, who along with some representatives of Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, was present by special invitation, also addressed the conference. Shri Dey, who referred to the coordination of the programme of Community Development and Sarva Seva Sangh brought about at Yelwal, said that the C.D. programme had now an ally in the Sangh. It was particularly welcome because of the absence of active help from political parties, despite their sympathy with the programme. This association, he added, would help the educational programme, which was to play an important part in the implementation of the Panchayati Raj.

Referring to his discussions with the visiting farmers from Rajasthan and other States of India, Shri Dey said that his meeting with them had convinced him that the era of petitions and grievances was over in States, which had transferred the entire responsibility for planning and implementing the developmental programmes to peoples' institutions. Farmers from Rajasthan, he said, had laid great stress on the fact that problems in regard to schools, seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, etc., were now to be solved by themselves because they had been invested not only with responsibilities but also with all the powers, the staff and the necessary finances.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, who spoke next, assured the Development Commissioners of all help from the Sarva Seva Sangh. He characterised the scheme of Panchayati Raj as a "courageous experiment" which held the key which might unlock the energies of the "sleeping giant" of 400 million people of India. While the political parties and leadership had failed, he said, the experiment of Panchayati Raj "might do the trick". Rajasthan, any way, had shown that the door was opening.

This experiment, Shri Narayan added, must not be allowed to fail, and every possible effort should be made to make it a success, because, should it fail, there would be absolutely no prospect for democracy in India. The success of this experiment, according to Shri Narayan, was of considerable importance to the question of whether we were going to have the democratic way of life in this country and also would show the way to other countries of Asia and Africa.

The party system of Western democracy, Shri Narayan added, was unsuited to Asia and Africa. Twelve years of its functioning from above had shown that, despite the adult franchise, it did not make democracy real to the people. The system resulted in a democratic oligarchy in which members of the elite got elected periodically without making the people feel that they had a place in the system, excepting once in five years when they were called upon to exercise their vote.

Gandhiji's conception of Gram Raj, according to Shri Narayan, was based upon democracy at the village level, where most of the work to cater to the primary needs of the people was to be done, the upper echelons dealing with fewer and fewer aspects. The Panchayati Raj system of panchayat at the village level, and Block Samiti at the convenient level of the Block of 100 villages, he said, held out a bright prospect for the fruition of Gandhiji's dream.

THERE IS NO SHORT CUT

NEW PATTERNS

By YUDHISHTAR

WE HAVE entered the bicycle age, said the Prime Minister recently. Even in the remotest of our villages, a bicycle is no longer a novelty. It has sunk into the Indian soil more deeply than any other gadget of modern civilization. And yet it was not introduced into this country with a fan-fare of publicity. A shrewd person that he is, the Indian villager prefers to trust his common sense and goes by his own experience. In one of the Blocks I visited recently, I was told that an improved five-rupee plough offered at a concessional rate was not wanted by the peasant. Is he against the improved practices ? Is he so unintelligent as to disregard the definite advantages of an improved variety of plough ? If he can ride a bicycle, he can as well manage a better type of a simple tool which he has to handle everyday of his life. I am afraid, there is something wrong in our extension methods, if they exist at all, which is responsible for his attitude towards improved implements. A natural link between our research centres and laboratories on the one hand and the villager on the other is still to emerge. The truth that the only hope of Indian agriculture lies in improved practices has not even been vaguely understood or realised by the Indian peasants. Extension was considered to be one of the primary functions of the programme of Community Development as it originally unfolded itself in this country. Today with the Cooperatives and the Panchayats to look after, extension is being squeezed out of its original place. Can the Panchayats and the Cooperatives be made to implement the extension programme ? If they don't, they will develop into mere talking houses and a breeding ground for vested interests.

GENERALIST APPROACH

If extension had suceeded, we would have had the countryside filled with compost pits. Today the number of compost pits in the country looks impressive only on paper. We do not need any foreign exchange or complicated equipment for preparing compost pits. We have the raw material and our villagers have the time to do it. And yet the idea has not caught on in spite of intensive work by our Gram-Sevaks during the last seven years. These Gram Sevaks who started very well and have many things to their credit cannot possibly deal with the specialised problems confronted in the field today. They started as multi-purpose workers and no one has bothered to examine whether our villagers' problems still remain basically elementary and whether the generalist approach of the Gram Sevaks answers the peasant's present requirement. Obviously the peasant's problems are no longer the ones which can be resolved by a generalist approach. Agriculture, no less than industry, calls for a very high degree of specialisation. If the present-day Gram Sevaks who are directed to devote 80 per cent of their time to agriculture, have no specialised knowledge or equipment, they will be misfits in this developing programme.

The extension approach has not taken deep roots, despite the continuous orientation to which our field workers have been subjected. The village latrine, which is sometimes pointed out as a show-piece to a V.I.P. is a standing inst-

ance of wrong methods used and misplaced idealism of some of our field workers. In the matter of improved seeds and fertilisers, supply lines are choked and the distribution methods out-dated. The programme of Community Development was specifically meant to resolve all these difficulties with the aid of extension methods. Despite the fanatic zeal of our workers, the programme has not been moving fast enough. And now the entire responsibility of carrying the message of extension has been transferred to the people at large as represented in the Panchayats, the Cooperatives and a host of other voluntary organisations. It is true that the lesson has been learnt that the development of the community is a process in which the officials have the least important role to play. The Pradhans and the Pramukhs are coming into their own under the *Panchayati Raj* of democratic decentralisation. No one questions the credentials of these new representatives of the people. It is their privilege to make mistakes and learn their own lessons. But an equally heavy responsibility rests on our workers to assist in the process. In this task, the only weapon our workers can safely handle is the method of Extension.

And extension has its own limitations. The peasant is willing to be convinced by the demonstration farms, the exhibitions and the Melas; he is eager to join the Gram Sahayaks' Camps and is ready to avail himself of the knowledge and the services of the Extension worker. But who will assure him the timely supply of improved seeds and fertilizers, additional credit for his extended operations and a guarantee of minimum prices for his produce ? He has to be a good businessman first before he becomes a progressive farmer. If extension cannot solve his problems at the various stages of his production programme, help and assistance at the primary stage is not of much value. If extension is to succeed, it has to be supported all along the line by an integrated programme designed to carry him forward through all the different stages. It is this integrated programme which will be the responsibility of the Panchayat Samitis and the Zila Parishads. *Panchayati Raj* will stand or fall by the vigour with which such a programme is planned and worked out. I see signs of this development already taking shape in a State which has been for sometime in the forefront of this movement.

UNLETTERED BUT ENLIGHTENED

Rajasthan is going all out to give to the dispossessed a sense of belonging. The State has launched a number of novel experiments in administration, socio-economic relationships and agricultural production. These experiments are not only talked about and discussed with field workers at various levels but the necessary procedures and conventions are worked out with a regularity and precision worthy of an established Church. One wonders if the transition from feudalism to democracy can be swifter than the transition from dyarchy to freedom.

The latest experiment which is being tried in Rajasthan follows a decision to hold State Cabinet meetings at the various District headquarters. At these meetings the Cabinet will consider and take decisions on matters relating to development works through personal discussions with Members of Parliament and the State Assembly, Zila Pramukh, Pradhans of Panchayat Samitis and District level officers. The State capital will no longer monopolise State activity and every District will have the pride of representing the State as a whole and discussing freely the affairs of the State. The Zila Parishad office will be charged with new political and developmental forces. Here will meet the directly elected State level representatives and the indirectly elected representatives of the Village Panchayats. The confluence of the two streams of political power at the District level is bound to release new forces in the working of a decentralised form of democracy.

This Rajasthan experiment should not be mistaken for a spectacular move on the part of a State which till recently had been identified with a backward area. It is the result of a number of far-reaching changes being brought about in the States. In every State one finds that

power is slowly but gradually moving downwards from the State headquarters. But in no other State, this process is being helped and encouraged with so much imagination and confidence. The literacy level in the State may not be heartening but the people are enlightened.

WHITE-COLLAR OPINION

From time to time we are regaled to spicy reports of financial irregularities committed by Gram Panchayats. Some of these refer to expenditure on items which are not considered essential by audit authorities but were in the opinion of the villagers deemed very essential. While it would be improper for the Panchayats to spend public money on non-authorised items, it would not be reasonable to expect villagers to react in a particular way to social conventions and public functions. The Panchayats should be perfectly free to incur expenditure on what they may consider to be useful items. White-collar opinion and villagers' views may differ on these matters and so it would be best to leave a larger amount of freedom to Panchayats than what may be considered necessary under the rules of thumb. Local self-Government cannot be nurtured by rules of social conduct unrelated to the soil. I am afraid the Panchayats will have to fight many a battle before they are allowed to manage their affairs in their own way. The only authority to challenge their rights should normally be the Panchayat Samiti.

It is heartening that every State is forging its own pattern of Local self-Government. Punjab villages will have a right, under the new Panchayat Act, to "recall" the head of their elected representatives in Panchayats, if they felt dis-satisfied with his work. The Gram Sabha would be entitled to express no confidence in the head of the Panchayat, the Sarpanch, by a two-thirds majority. All adults in a village are members of the Gram Sabha and serve as the People's Parliament to which the Panchayat as an executive body would be responsible for its actions. Even if the Gram Sabha meets only twice a year this would work as a welcome tonic on the conduct and efficiency of the Sarpanch. It is true that the weapon of "recall" is a dangerous instrument and should be used only with the greatest circumspection. But it is necessary to have some such kind of "party-whip" to keep the Sarpanches on their track.

Andhra Pradesh has completed the constitution of all the 235 Panchayat Samitis and the 20 Zila Parishads in the State. These bodies have attracted some of the best talent and experience available in the rural areas. The resources of the Panchayat Samitis have been considerably enhanced. Powers exercised up to now by officers in matters relating to planning and development have now been transferred to them. Financial powers—up to Rs. 1 lakh in the case of the Zila Parishad and up to Rs. 30,000 for the Panchayat Samiti—have been conferred. Referring to these exciting developments, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh recently wrote : "A vast opportunity has been created for the full play of the enthusiasm of the people's representatives, for the development of initiative among them, and for the mobilisation of resources in the villages. People might make mistakes, but, in the very process, they should grow in experience and acquire administrative ability. I am optimistic that democratic decentralisation would, thus, provide the necessary training for the growth of sound leadership at various levels from which would spring the future administrators and statesmen of this country."

But can we afford too many mistakes to be made in the process of developing a new leadership from the ground ? Extension of powers to untrained people is dangerous unless it is accompanied by a systematic campaign of orientation and training. I have evidence that Andhra Pradesh, like Rajasthan, realises the importance of the training programme fully. "To harness the great enthusiasm", writes the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, "which this measure has unleashed all over the State, and to give it the proper direction and shape, we have, under the control of the Zila Parishads, arranged a programme of training for all the members of these democratic bodies, mostly through non-officials assisted by a

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KRISHNA RATH AND PUSHPA PLOUGH

We publish below details of two new devices which should interest our agriculturists. These are an improved bullock cart—Krishna rath—and a new type of bull tractor—Pushpa plough—designed by the Prithvi Trust—an institution engaged in the research relating to agricultural implements and small-scale industries.—Ed. G.S.

The Prithvi Trust, an institution engaged in research in agricultural implements and small scale industries have contrived an improved bullock cart, which they have named as Krishna rath. They have also devised a new type of tractor, named as Bull tractor.

KRISHNA RATH

The known carts generally need two bullocks, while the new cart can be drawn by a single bullock to carry the same pay load. Hence it cuts down initial as well as maintenance cost of bullocks by about 50 per cent.

As the known carts have two wheels, the load is required to be properly balanced, but with all the care, the nature of their load does not permit regulated balancing. Consequently, the load falls on the bullocks' necks and hence they have to perform two functions, *viz.* to support the load and pull the load. Thus, the animals have to exert greater effort. This strain reduces the life and efficiency of bullocks, and as there are no schemes in India for insurance of the animals the farmers are regularly put to a great loss economically and emotionally. But, since the Krishna rath is fitted with three wheels, the care and labour of balancing the load is eliminated except the weight of the yoke bar, as the animals have only to perform one function of pulling the load and thus have to put minimum effort whereby the life of bullocks is extended.

Formation of a pair of bullocks presents a problem to the farmer as both of them should be of the same age, the same health, the same height and especially of the same temperament. Elimination of these difficulties remained unnoticed since ages, as all these conditions could not be easily fulfilled. So the pair is generally uneven and hence inefficient at work. Again, if one of the animals from a pair is injured, the other cannot be put into service. Krishna rath dispenses with the difficulties in respect of the formation of a pair.

A conventional cart weighs about 12 to 16 cwts., but the Krishna rath weighs only about half its weight. In the use of known carts, the bare weight is equal to load; but, the adoption of Krishna rath will enable to transport extra payload to the extent of reduction in weight of the cart without straining the bullock.

Unlike the known carts, this new cart is drawn by a single bullock as well as by a pair of bullocks if desired, with more load. Besides, it will reduce the labour and expenses by about 50 per cent, in accommodation space for bullocks and care-taking.

Unlike the conventional carts, all the three wheels of the Krishna rath have the same diameter with full bearings, which eliminates strain on the bullocks, caused by the faster movement of one of the wheels due to their uneven diameter.

Constant jerks on account of loose bearings, uneven diameter of the wheels and walking movement of bullocks, makes the travel uncomfortable. Since these defects have been eliminated, travel in Krishna rath will be comfortable.

As the bearings of the wheels in the conventional carts are loose, the animals have to exert extra energy whereby the bullocks soon get exhausted, which fact remained unnoticed for ages. But as the wheels of Krishna rath have full bearing with the axles, the bullocks do not put in any extra energy.

The new cart has no side-movement of the yoke-bar and hence bullocks will not suffer from yoke 'galls'. Besides, the wheels of Krishna rath have no side-play and so it could not damage the cement or metal roads by cutting. Wear and tear and frictional loss is also minimised, more so, as unlike the use of

edible oils for lubricating the wheel bearings, the bearings in Krishna rath are provided with grease cups for lasting lubrication. If desired, even oil can be used with the same cups.

As the new cart needs only one bullock, the second man of the family can utilise the second bullock for other work. Thus, the adoption of Krishna rath will provide an employment to about 30 million extra people in India on the basis that about 3 crore carts are used in about 6 lakh villages of the nation. This will result in higher production of food and economic security for the farmers.

The yoke bar in the primitive carts being fixed to the chassis, the walking movement of the bullocks is transmitted to the axles which creates an opposite force of pushing the wheels backward. So, too, the bullocks have to exert greater effort. The wearing of the axles at the bottom is a clear proof of this defect. On account of such flattening of axles too, the bullocks have to put more energy. But since the yoke bar of Krishna rath is pivotally held, this defect is eliminated. It is provided with brakes for use on sloping roads and other emergencies.

Krishna rath is also manufactured with ball bearings and pneumatic tyres.

BULL TRACTOR

The field with the new Bull tractor is best ploughed after the setting of the monsoon when the soils have become soft by water by which time all the weed seeds will have grown. As the tilling blade of the Bull tractor is designed to travel under soil, the land is ploughed without inversion of surface soil and simultaneously all the weeds with their roots are pulled out, thus avoiding their sprouting again. Thus, since inversion of soil is dispensed with and the weed nuisance is eliminated, adoption of the Bull tractor—Pushpa plough will greatly step up per acre yield.

In addition, as ploughing will be carried out when the soil is soft, hauling of the Bull tractor needs minimum effort for a bullock and hence the life of the bullock is lengthened. Again, leaving the field without ploughing after harvest, will effect drying of the top soil of the field and ensure greater soil fertility.

The conventional plough can be used for ploughing only, while for weeding and other farm work, the agriculturist has to use different implements. But this multipurpose Bull tractor can be used for ploughing-*cum*-weeding, manuring under soil, earthing up, tilling, for sowing seeds and hill-spotting for transplantation by joining separate attachments.

As the conventional ploughs have one tilling point and as they are light in weight, they require steady balancing as well as pressing simultaneously. Hence, a farmer has to exert great effort whereby he is often overstrained. But, in the Pushpa plough, the tilling blade is of a length such as to balance weight, and hence, the plough neither requires balancing nor pressing, with the result that the farmer is relieved of the strain which he has to undergo otherwise.

In the fields ploughed with conventional ploughs, the seeds are broadcast which at time retards the growth as most of the plants grown from broadcast seeds have shallow roots. In similar way manure is also broadcast which causes about 50 per cent wastage of manure because valuable humus evaporates. Moreover, the broadcast manure on the surface does not reach deep roots and hence the very object of manuring is defeated. The same is the case even when manure is manually buried close to the plants. But, with this Bull tractor, manure is spread away from the plants under the soil. As a result, manure reaches the roots of the plants and the per acre yield is stepped up.

The known plough needs two bullocks to draw and if the plough drops while balancing, it injures the hind leg of one of the bullocks, thereby making the other also unserviceable. Unlike this, the Pushpa plough is drawn by a single bullock.

As two bullocks are used in conventional ploughing, a farmer has to maintain both of them which means that the cost of maintenance is doubled. So the Bull tractor cuts down the cost of main-

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COOPERATIVE SUPERVISING UNIONS

The organisation of Cooperative supervising unions at the block or equivalent level is very necessary for the purpose of supervision, education, organisation and promotion. These supervising unions should be federated into district unions and a Union at the State level. It is only thus that non-official effort in the Cooperative fields can be secured on a sound and stable basis.

A group of village cooperatives should be organised into supervising unions. The area of operation of a supervising union should be a community development block. In areas not covered by such blocks, a corresponding number of villages and population should be covered by a supervising union. Every village society will have one representative on the supervising union and will pay a small fee. Central financing agencies covering the area of operation of a supervising union will also send one or two representatives and will contribute to the funds of the supervising unions according to the volume of credit they provide to the societies in that area. All other cooperative organisations working in that area will also join as members and pay contributions.

Government may also contribute to the fund of the union, an amount sufficient to balance its budget. As time passes and the cooperatives and the central financing agencies develop, their contributions will increase and to that extent the Government contributions can be reduced. The supervising unions will not only supervise the affiliated societies but will also be responsible for the educational and organisational work in the area within their jurisdiction. The tasks of educating the members of the societies and the members of the Executive Committee is very important and should be the responsibility of the supervising unions, which will be given all the necessary assistance. They should also formulate the cooperative development plan and review the progress made.

District Unions

There should be a district union for each district which should be a federation of the supervising unions in the district. The other cooperatives working in the district which are not members of the supervising unions, *e.g.* urban societies, should also join the district union. The Central Banks and various district organisations, *e.g.*, marketing, should also be members of the district union. The district unions will receive contributions from the affiliated supervising unions, urban societies, district federations, central financing agencies and subsidies from Government. They will be concerned with educational, organisational and supervision work and will help the supervising unions in the district. They should have some technical staff, who will visit the supervising unions, advise, guide and assist them and take the necessary remedial action in respect of the work of the supervising unions. State unions will be federations of district unions organised on the same lines, with the same functions and will be financed on similar lines.

There is no Short Cut

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few officers, in the important aspect of planning, development and administration. Equipped with the knowledge so imparted, I am sure, they would bring to bear considerable ability and confidence in handling the task they have so enthusiastically undertaken and would, before long, bring about a transformation in the countryside."

PANCHAYATI RAJ

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look up to the eldest for this sacrifice and endow him with the dignity and privilege of the senior.

If we could start the system of our Panchayati Raj from the family outwards on this pattern, our Panchayats, Samitis, Parishads, Legislatures and Parliament would be a mere expansion of the family. Our family is disrupted today because the intermediary links higher up did not exist or if they did, were disrupted and poisoned in a virulent way. The new system of Panchayati Raj has been heralded to set the tone once again. (*Based on a Message to the Farmers of Rajasthan*).

THE GOOD EARTH

THE FOUNDATION of all production is land. Hence the saying : "Civilization is rooted in the Soil".

Our food, fodder, fibre and fuel stem from the land. The Good Earth is therefore the greatest asset of any country. Cities and civilizations in the past have vanished because of soil neglect. Proper conservation of the soil is a National duty.

Indian economy is basically agricultural. About 50 per cent of the national income comes from land. Seventy per cent of the population base their livelihood on agriculture. Sustained high production from land is of primary importance for the country's economic stability since prosperity in the field of agriculture can in turn ensure a high level of industrial activity, successful business, throbbing trade centres—in short a happy and prosperous nation.

SOIL EROSION

One of the most important causes for low agricultural yields in India is soil erosion or denudation of the surface of the land by the action of water and wind. This results in great loss of surface soil and plant food. It lessens the sub-soil water-table, silts up water channels, disrupts communications, and reduces the productivity of the land. The ultimate havoc is a lowering of the already low standard of living of the peasants.

It is estimated that in an unprotected field the top seven inches of soil can become eroded in just 27 years. On the other hand Nature might have taken 500—1,000 years to build up this same depth of soil. More fertilizers, improved seeds and better plant protection measures are all poor rescue measures once the soil, which is the physical basis of all agricultural production, has been allowed to deteriorate. For sustained and increased production from our land we must save our Soil.

ADVANTAGES OF CONSERVATION

Neglect and misuse of land has been going on for decades. Today there are vast areas that have gone out of cultivation. In many more areas the productivity has decreased considerably. There are about 200 million acres that need prompt attention. Of these about 100 million acres are agricultural land, 50 million acres are fallow and other uncultivated kinds of land and 50 million acres are desert areas—mainly in Rajasthan State.

Soil conservation does much more than safeguard the land. It increases crop yields by more than 50 per cent. It ensures production from land on a sustained basis. It reduces siltation in streams and, therefore, in the flood crests. It improves the nutritional value of crops grown on land.

In the past soil conservation did not receive much attention in India. As long as we had plenty of unsettled land, conservation did not seem important. A few farmers took good care of their land, but many others let it erode until it was worn out and then they moved on to other land. We did not have a national programme of soil conservation till after Independence.

URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM

The urgency of the problem of soil erosion and land deterioration was appreciated by the Planning Commission and in pursuance of their recommendation in December, 1953 the Central Soil Conservation Board was set up to tackle the problem on an all-India basis. The Board is charged with the responsibility to organise, coordinate and initiate research on soil conservations, to train personnel for manning soil conservation schemes and to assist States and River Valley Projects technically and financially by advancing loans and giving subsidies, to carry out their soil conservation programmes.

The Central Soil Conservation Board has worked out an integrated programme of Survey, Research, Demonstration Training and Development. It has established nine Regional Research-c u m-Demonstration Centres to investigate regional soil erosion problems. These are located at Dehra Dun (Himalayan region), Chandigarh (outer Siwaliks), Chatra (Water Shed management), Kotah (Ravines in Rajasthan), Vasad (Kotar lands of Gujrat), Agra

(Yamuna Ravines), Bellary (Black soil), Ootacamund (Hilly areas), and Jodhpur (Desert). The Board has on its programme the establishment of two more centres, one each in Orissa and Andhra, for undertaking soil conservation research in Red Soil areas. The station at Jodhpur has been upgraded as a Central Arid Zone Research Institute to carry out research on fundamental applied problems of the Arid Zones. To stabilise the drifting sands of the desert (Rajasthan) the Board has started a pasture development scheme.

INTENSIVE TRAINING

The Board has been training in soil conservation Senior and Junior Officers to carry out various programmes on the field. Besides, intensive short training courses have also been started for the benefit of the staff of Community Development.

Blocks and Agricultural Engineers engaged in soil conservation work in the States. The Board is also subsidising schemes in the States for the training of field assistants.

In May, 1958 the All-India Soil and Land Use Survey Scheme was started. Survey is in progress in the watersheds of six major River Valley projects—Bhakra, Hirakud, Chambal, Machkund, Kosi and D.V.C. About 5 million acres have been covered so far.

PEOPLE'S COOPERATION

The speed and effectiveness of soil conservation programmes ultimately depend on the willingness of the people to undertake work, with a realisation of some significant facts.

Erosion takes place whereever the land slopes. In steep and long slopes natural vegetation should be preserved carefully as they will reduce erosion. Clearing such vegetation for cultivation will cause erosion of surface soil and also damage agricultural lands, reservoirs and springs down below, by silting.

Afforestation and pasture development on steep slopes are the best covers to sustain and protect the soil. Plantation of alternate strips of clean tilled and thick crops at right angles to the main slope of the land gives maximum protection from erosion.

Before starting to cultivate sloping lands moisture conservation practices should be organised, especially in places of low rainfall. Contour trenching and contour bunding of lands in low rainfall areas will conserve the available moisture for crops.

All stones and boulders dug up when opening up land for cultivation should not be disposed of haphazardly, but put into proper use for building barriers and contour walls. Soil conservation experts trained by the Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture will always give advice in tackling lands which have already undergone erosion.

PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE

To develop the proper "know-how" of soil conservation and dry farming practices which have great potential for increased agricultural production on a sustained basis the Board has started a scheme to lay out 40 demonstration projects in the various States, each covering about 1,000 acres, on a catchment basis, *i.e.* on the basis of an area having a single *nalla* for drainage of water.

In the Second Plan it is programmed to protect 20 lakh acres of agricultural land and 10 lakh acres of other areas by soil conservation measures estimated to cost Rs. 20.5 crore. The targets of the Second Plan are expected to be achieved. The programme will be intensified manyfold in the Third Five Year Plan with major emphasis on agricultural land in view of the urgency to attain self-sufficiency in food production. Other priorities are River Valley Projects, Flood Control Activities, Hilly areas, Desert areas, Ravines, Waste lands and denuded forests. Reclamation of saline and alkaline lands will also be taken up.

In the Third Five Year Plan emphasis is expected to be placed on people's participation in the soil conservation programme as soil conservation measures on the land have finally to be carried out by the farmer himself who lives by it and is also the chief beneficiary.

KRISHNA RATH AND PUSHPA PLOUGH

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tenance of bullocks by about 50 per cent as well as the initial investment by about 50 per cent.

(*Courtesy* : **The Farmer** *published by the Government of Bombay*)

SERVICE CO-OPERATIVES

THE RURAL credit society, which dominated the co-operative movement in India until recently, was characterised by its small size, exclusive and small membership, lack of production programme and development resources, indifferent management and absence of adequate marketing facilities. To help achieve the objective of democratic planning and a socialistic pattern, therefore, the National Development Council reviewed the co-operative programme and called for organisation throughout the country of service co-operatives, a term which has obtained wide currency since the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress.

In a sense, all co-operatives are engaged in providing services to their members. A distinction can, however, be drawn between production co-operatives, which undertake production in their corporate capacity like a joint co-operative farming society and service co-operative, where the operations of agriculture are carried out individually by the members while common services are provided by the co-operative.

Though a number of multi-purpose co-operatives and agricultural credit societies that existed in the country sought to provide supplies and services needed by their members, most of these societies actually confined their activity to supply of credit.

The service co-operatives, on the other hand, are expected to assume total responsibility for economic development at the village level by providing all essential supplies and services necessary for increasing agricultural production. The aim is to ensure that every family engaged in agricultural production is represented in the service co-operative, and that everyone obtains credit and supplies necessary for implementing his agricultural production programme.

The service co-operative concerns itself with the provision of short and medium term credit, the supply of agricultural production requisites and standardised consumer goods. It should also arrange for the marketing of agricultural produce through marketing societies in *mandis* and help in formulating and implementing agricultural production plans of the members and do such educative, advisory and welfare work as may be feasible.

The National Development Council, in its Resolution of November 1958, laid down that ordinarily every single village should have a service cooperative. If it happens to be too small a village, two or more villages, with a population of about 1,000, may be brought together. This would mean that in due course a society can have a membership of about 200 and can claim advantage of homogeneity, along with a certain measure of economic viability.

For the liability to be assumed by the members of a service co-operative, each society is to be left to decide for itself.

The membership and turnover of the service co-operative in the initial stages will naturally be restricted, while the minimum expenditure that it will have to incur will be considerable. Government have, therefore, decided to subsidise each society to the extent of Rs. 900 a year over a period not exceeding five years.

The village co-operatives are also to have the facility of godowns constructed for a group of villages by the marketing cooperatives to whom necessary loans and subsidies are to be provided by the Government.

The service co-operatives are not to function in isolation. They are to be linked to district co-operative banks on the one hand, and marketing societies in the *mandis* on the other.

The National Development Council envisaged that over a period of time the village co-operatives should be able to find resources for themselves by mobilising local savings. Deposits today constitute only about 8 per cent of the working capital of agricultural credit societies. Since nearly 45 per cent of the national income in India comes from the rural sector, it is obvious that, unless co-operatives mobilise savings from the

(*Continued on Page* 13)

Handloom Through the Ages

ANCIENT Indian literature abounds in references to indigenous fabrics. Men used to wear the cloth woven by their women-folk themselves. Headgear called *'ushnisha'*, embroidered petticoat *'nivi'*, marriage clothes *'vathuya'* and the frilled dress *'tupa'*, were in vogue in the *Vedic* times. A garment frilled with pearls has been called *'manicheera'* in the *Mahabharata*. References of India's accomplishment in artistic weaving are found in Buddhist Pali and Jain literature as well.

The Dacca muslin is of historic fame. A piece of Dacca muslin, 20 yards long and one yard wide could easily pass through a ring hole. A 75-yard piece of Dacca muslin did not weigh more than two ounces.

Recent excavations at Mohen-jo-Daro and Harappa have proved that Indians were masters in the art of dyeing and weaving of cloth even as early as 5000 B.C. Indian muslin was the choice of Egyptians for dressing their mummies. Megasthenese wrote that Indian textiles were worked in gold and were decked with costly jewels. Quality velvet fabrics were adorned with floral designs. Marcopolo from Italy, first among the Christians to visit India, wrote that Masulipattam fabrics, were soft and beautiful like tissues. Flowers made on Indian cloth, we are told, were attractive like the real flowers in a garden. Calicut muslin was so fine that one did not feel it on one's hand and its thread could not be seen by the naked eye. It is said that with the help of steel hooks, young women wove the yarn in the early hours of dawn while the dew was still fresh on the ground so that necessary moisture might be available in the air for weaving excellent yarn. Indian muslin was known in France by many poetic names such as 'woven air', 'monsoon shower', etc.

According to Daniel Defoe, Indian cloth had found its place into every English home. The Indian prints were used by women, high and low for their garments. Even more, Indian cloth was widely used for bed-sheets, curtains, cushion cloth, pillow covers, etc. For feminine sarotorial requirements and house decoration also, Indian handloom cloth was used.

Numerous accounts of Indian fabrics are interspersed in historical and literary writings or travelogues by foreigners about India. In ancient Indian books too, there are many places where Indian fabrics and apparels have been vividly described. All these testify to their international repute and their elegance, a matter of joy and one might genuinely feel proud to recollect those obscure workers and humble craftsmen who contributed with each thread and each pattern to the nation's glory and prestige which has survived through the ages.

SERVICE CO-OPERATIVES

(Continued from Page 12)

rural sector, it will be difficult to find adequate resources from outside. Hence thrift and savings are to be an integral and vital function of the service co-operative.

According to the National Development Council's resolution, village cooperatives are to cover the entire rural population by the end of the Third Five Year Plan. At present, a little over 50 per cent of the villages and about 20 per cent of the rural population are within the fold of cooperatives. There are about 1,68,000 societies, out of which about 100,000 require activisation. The programme envisaged by the National Development Council involves revitalisation of these dormant and moribund societies and organisation of another 100,000 new societies and expansion of membership and functions of all village co-operatives.

During 1959-60, 38,795 service co-operatives are being set up through a programme of forming new societies and reorganising the existing village co-operatives. The programme for 1960-61 envisages the establishment of about 33,000 societies. By the end of Second Plan thus there would be 70,000 and odd service co-operatives throughout the country. Together with the existing societies, these are expected to serve 20 million rural families and to supply credit of the order of Rs. 200 crores.

FROM THE STATES

UTTAR PRADESH

THERE ARE 334 Co-operative farms in Uttar Pradesh; with total membership of nearly 7,000. These farms earned a profit of Rs. 2,39,710 last year. They have an area of 61,016 acres and a working Capital of Rs. 44,93,443.

DELHI

THE ELECTIONS to the Panchayats of Delhi Rural area are now over. In all, 205 gram panchayats and 22 circle panchayats have been formed and about 2,750 office bearers elected. A unique feature of these elections, which were held by ballot as against the normal practice of by show of hands, was that about 800 panches were elected unopposed.

Of the 203 Up-Gram Pradhans elected, 167 were returned unopposed.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

IT IS UNDERSTOOD that about 20,000 peasants are putting in voluntary labour in the Kashmir Valley to construct village canals and minor flood protection bunds under the National Extension Service schemes. Women are also participating in community development work. People, spread over the far-flung mountainous areas, are contributing their mite in making various development schemes a success.

MADRAS

THE GOVERNMENT of Madras have decided to constitute Panchayat Unions in all the 370 Development Blocks in the State in three batches. The Government are now taking steps under the Madras Panchayats Act. 1958, to bring into existence the new type of institutions called "Panchayat Unions", which will replace District Boards under a phased programme. The Madras State has already been delimited into 370 Development Blocks. The first batch of Panchayat Unions will be in the 75 Development Blocks where the National Extension Service scheme has already been introduced. The second batch comprises about 130 blocks where the National Extension Service scheme has already been introduced and the third batch all other blocks where the National Extension Service scheme has not yet been introduced.

WEST BENGAL

ELECTIONS FOR 3,200 Panchayats are already over. Another 4,000 Panchayats will be formed by April, 1960. The entire State will be covered by Panchayats by 1960. By April, 1960, it is expected to cover 106 blocks out of the 168 blocks in the State. Setting up of Panchayats has to be completed before statutory Block Panchayat Samities can be constituted. The question of replacing District Boards by Zila Parishads at District level is under consideration.

TRIPURA

THE ADMINISTRATION has extended the U.P. Panchayats Act to Tripura Administration and proposes to establish 150 Panchayats in the beginning of the next year and by the end of the next year nearly 300 panchayats.

KERALA

WITH A VIEW to avoid dislocation of work in the blocks, the State Government of Kerala has taken steps to ensure that the staff in one block is not transferred to other blocks for at least three years.

RAJASTHAN

RAJASTHAN is going ahead with democratic decentralisation and is fully covered with Panchayats. Apart from the 'local works' portion of the schematic budget, 3¼ percent of the land revenue is being allotted to Panchayats. An Emergency Course of training for the members of the Block Development Committees has already been given to 3,000 persons. From January 1960 onwards it is proposed to train 5,000 members up to the end of 1960-61. The question of recruitment and training of Panchayat Secretaries is under consideration of the State Cabinet.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

OUT OF 1,105 criminal cases brought before the 468 Nyaya Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, 616 were decided during the last eight months. Judicial Panchayats decided 293 and 175 civil and revenue cases respectively, during the same period. The Samjhota Committee, constituted by the Panchayats, brought about compromise in 3,520 criminal cases and 2,712 civil suits between April and November last year. Fifty training camps were organized for 3,428 Nyaya Panches.

OUR POST BOX

(*Readers' questions are answered in these columns by* **VIDUR**)

Question : What has been the impact of C.D. programme on agricultural indebtedness ?

Answer : No proper evaluation or survey has been carried out in this connection so far; but it may be claimed that the condition of agricultural indebtedness seems to have registered some improvement during the last few years. As a result of the intensive cultivation measures adopted in the Development Blocks, the cultivators have been able to increase their produce by about 15%. This increase in the farm output has helped them partly to clear off their debts and partly to raise their standard of living. The Government have also set institutionalised provision of credit at reasonable rates to agriculturists. The co-operative credit is now playing an increasing role in the rural economy. It is estimated that the co-operative societies will have advanced loans to nearly 10 million agriculturists to the tune of Rs. 115 crore during this year as against Rs. 23 crore only during 1950-51. At the suggestion of the National Development Council it is now proposed to advance a total credit of Rs. 400 crore to 20 million farmers by the end of the Second Five Year Plan. It will thus be possible to meet more than half of the total credit requirements of the cultivators, broadly estimated to be of the order of Rs. 750 crore by the Rural Credit Survey Report. Apart from cooperative credit, other factors like the increase in prices of agricultural produce and debt relief legislations enacted in various States have had their effect on relieving agricultural indebtedness.

Question : The V.L.W. is the ground level multi-purpose worker on whom rests the final responsibility of carrying out the C.D. programme. What are the normal prospects of promotion of this vital functionary ?

Answer : The need for keeping suitable avenues of promotion open to outstanding Gram Sevaks has been emphasised more than once. Some of the posts to which their promotion could take place are those of S.E.O., Extension Officer for Industries, Cooperation, Panchayats, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. In fact most of the States have allocated a definite quota of such posts for them. Also, under the scheme of giving higher training to V.L.Ws, selected V.L.Ws will be enabled with the aid of stipends to qualify themselves at an Agricultural College for appointment as Extension Officer, Agriculture or Animal Husbandry. Thus the current system ensures eligibility for promotion to a number of posts under different departments. There is however, still further scope for improvement in the matter and the Central Government is keen to undertake further suitable steps in consultation with the various States.

Question : Is the setting up of a new block in a specific area carried out on an ad hoc basis or is determined by certain specific considerations ?

Answer : It is for the States primarily to decide where they propose to start new Blocks. The pre-extension Blocks are sanctioned keeping in view the enthusiasm and keenness for development work of the people of that area.

Even after a pre-extension Block is sanctioned, it is not supposed to be converted automatically into Stage I Block, but it is dependent on the fact whether or not the people continue to take increasing interest in their development. Other considerations kept in view are that :

(*i*) New blocks should be contiguous to existing

blocks so as to form a compact unit.

(*ii*) Blocks should be located round about agriculture/veterinary colleges and extension training centres and similar institutions.

(*iii*) Preference should be given to areas comprising Gramdan villages and other areas where there is a preponderance of backward classes.

(*iv*) Each District in the State should receive an adequate coverage.

Question: There has been a gradual shift in the conception of the Gram Sevak's role in the C.D. Programme. Could you throw some light on the latest position?

Answer: The basic role of a Gram Sevak as the ground-level link between the C.D. Programme and the people has remained unaltered. However, as the Programme has developed in the course of the last few years, his role has been modified in the light of the requirements of the shifting emphasis on various items of the programme. For instance, it has been brought to light from time to time and more recently by the UN Evaluation Mission Report that the Gram Sevak is heavily overworked, having to fulfil as many as 64 different obligations. This leaves him with little time and energy to devote to the most urgent and important task of agricultural development. Therefore, it was considered necessary to relieve him of as many non-essential duties as possible. It was recommended that jobs like collection of revenue, small-scale savings, Rural Life Insurance, census, elections and the distribution of various kinds of loans, routine items pertaining to Health, Education should be taken away from him. His job-chart has, therefore, been prepared afresh. His duties have now been streamlined with particular emphasis on Agriculture on which he is required to spend 80% of his time. Further development and adjustment in his duties is taking place in the context of the Panchayati Raj under way in the country side. Like other C.D. personnel, he will also have to learn to perform his duties in collaboration with the Panchayats. In his own interest and that of the programme itself, he will have to strengthen the village institutions like the Yuvak Mandal, the Mahila Mandal and other voluntary organisations so that the programmes relating to them are carried out by those bodies and he has only to help and guide them, wherever he can. Similarly, he has to ensure the supply of seeds, fertilisers and other items through the Village Service Co-operative whose proper sphere it is to arrange the same. In fact, the Gram Sevak, if he understands his job properly, need not himself physically perform many of his present day duties. To develop the spirit of self-help and the community way of doing things and to forge suitable village institutions for that purpose is his real job. The sooner he realises this, the better for him as well as the programme.

Question: What is the role of voluntary organisations in the development of the country?

Answer: An important objective of the development plans is to involve as large a number of people as possible and to make them responsible for their planning and execution. It is otherwise impossible to work out efficiently the various development schemes in a big country like ours. The entrusting of development work in the villages to Panchayats and Cooperatives is in line with this thinking. However, the development needs of the country are so great and the task is so tremendous that it needs the pooling of all the available resources of time, energy and talents of every man, woman and child. Besides, there are certain qualitative functions such as enthusing the people and inspiring them to have faith in themselves and the country, and the uplifting of the moral character of the people. These can be successfully accomplished only by voluntary organisations like the Sarva Seva Sangh, the Bharat Sewak Samaj and the Krishak Samaj. Special programmes relating to children, women and youths have to be carried out through organisations like Balkan ji Bari, Mahila Mandals and Youth Clubs. Services of trained Gram Sahayaks and progressive farmers have been enlisted in furthering the Kharif and Rabi Campaigns for growing more food.

ONE AGAINST THE MANY

Our Cartoonist's view of Indian agriculture which exemplifies the truth of the "One against the Many"

Harvest Scene : Men, women and children have an equal role.

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